HAROLD WEISBERG
ROUTE 12 - OLD RECEIVER ROAD
FREDERICK, MD. 21701

January 6, 1976

Mr. Arlen Specter
3417 Warden Drive
Philadelphia, Pa. 19129

Dear Mr. Specter:

In your today's press conference you were asked if you would debate me on your work on the Warren Commission. Your reply was that you would "have to think it over." Whereupon you launched into an attack on all the executive agencies for the failures of that Commission, one of whose most active and most important counsel you were. Then, as an afterthought, you said you would debate Senator Schweiker.

You have been "thinking over" whether to debate me for ten years. Most recently you have been "thinking it over" from the time University of Maryland students asked this of you in November. Back in 1966 you must have ducked at least two dozen such invitations. The last in that year a New York TV station and I thought you and three of your colleagues had accepted in a gang-up on me to have been titled "The Majority Report." You flew off to England for an easier mark and a free vacation and the others just flew. Period. The domestic show never came off despite their/your asking for it.

I have these questions about your record of running away from the one person who knows most about your record on the crucial medical evidence of the Warren Commission:

Are you fit to be a candidate for the United States Senate if in ten years you have not been able to make up your mind? Do the people of Pennsylvania want as a Senator a man who can't make up his mind in ten years? Especially when his integrity is in question, and that about the investigation of the assassination of a President which you parlayed into a political career?

Is it that you fear public confrontation with one who has studied your work more than any other would be ruinous to you and to your present political ambitions?

With all the public interest in political assassinations, if yours is as solid, decent and honorable a record as you pretend, why do you not grab this opportunity to advance your political ambitions while establishing beyond question that your work was all you claim for it in that tragic era that made you what you have become?

My credentials as an opponent you cannot equal. I am the one man the FBI has certified in court knows more about this subject than anyone in the FBI. I have written by far more on the subject than anyone else and more on your part of the work than you did in your official capacity and thereafter combined.

Your afterthought offer to debate Senator Schweiker is dirty politics and plain dirty. He has all the many responsibilities of a Senator and on his subcommittee, the life of which is short and staff small, he has had the obligation of looking into much more than your part if, in fact, that has fallen within his duties. Although you are of

the same party, yuu are adversaries. I understand you made a personal contribution to his last opppnent. So you pick a man who has not had the capability of learning what I have learned, knowing what I know, a man who is your political enemy, to try to take political advantage of him while still, after ten years, having to make up your mind whether to debate an expert on your work.

So, formally, I challenge you to a debate under the simplest conditions and on your turf. For example, any law school in Philadelphia. I will agree to almost any format and any moderator, such as a law-school dean, an experienced criminal lawyer - anyone of your selectinn and not partisan. I will agree to limitations on opening statements or to none at all; to limitations on answers to avoid filibusters; and in fairness to you, to exclude what was outside your area of work unless you elect to go into any such area, in which event I will have no objection.

In short, you can, for all practical purposes, write your own ticket.

I have two stipulations only: That each of us be given a tape recording with no restrictions on its use; and that my part be handled through Mr. Alan Walker of the Program Corporation of America, 914/428-5840, to meet my contractual obligations.

Two more weeks ought to be enough time, after Ten years, for you to "think it over." For this period I will have nothing further to say. If thereafter you have not accepted, I will consider myself free to comment anywhere and in any way I see fit. I will be away for a short period beginning the 15th.

I do suggest that if all the things you have been saying for all these years, including today, are factual and you have confidence in them, you will jump at this offer because in all ways I am the senior of you and the Warren Commission's and the executive agencies' critics.

Yours truly,

Harold

Harold Weisberg

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HAROLD WEISBERG

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